

# SELF

**January 2017**  
The magazine for women.



**7 Steps to reset  
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**Be Resolved:  
Use every  
breathing  
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Kathy Cook M.D.

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January is the calendar restart button. We get another go at our resolutions from the previous year — thank goodness. I can never actually hold to the resolutions. The new year is all about making better life choices. This issue has so many good suggestions on how to make those choices and stick with them. We also have ideas on how to deal with falling away from our goals and how to get back on track. I am very excited to put these suggestions into motion in my own life.

The one bit of two cents I have this month is write everything down. All of your goals. The needs and the wants. As you check off a goal — be it shovel the snow, paint the living room, lose 10 pounds or walk 3 miles — write your lists. For me things get added and every once in awhile some goals are reworked or taken out. The goals that are taken out are usually the brainstorm items that were in the moment. Those are the items I find very helpful in structuring the other more important goals on my lists.

Whatever your goals and resolutions are for the new year, I wish you luck! Don't get down on yourself if you have a setback. Instead, make a plan to work your way back to where you faltered. Then take off from there.

Happy New Year!

On the cover: Carrie Copley is a life coach, motivational speaker and does business training. Contributed photo



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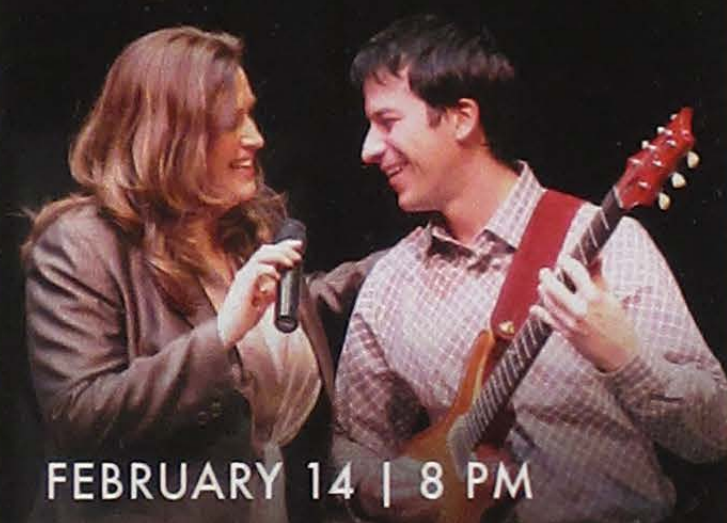
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BY EILEEN  
GEBBIE  
Contributing  
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# BE RESOLVED

I am not sure why it is that the change of a calendar is so motivating for us to make changes in our lives. The marking of time has changed over time. The calendar we now follow (instituted by Pope Gregory) is not yet 500 years old, a baby by comparison to others. In the Chinese calendar we are well into the 4000s, in the Hebrew calendar we are in the 5000s. No matter which we follow, time exists outside of our organization of it, making calendars merely a tool for managing our sense of time, not time itself. The page flip from 2016 to 2017 has no substance beyond what we bring to that moment, no meaning beyond the meaning we want.

My job as a pastor is, in a lot of ways, about helping a community with finding meaning. What does it mean that we are born so vulnerably, that we remain so vulnerable throughout our lives? The tiniest virus can get us, another human may end us. What are we supposed to do with these fleeting hours? Are our base needs — food, water, sex and sleep — the whole story? More importantly, don't I need to lose some weight?

But being a person of faith isn't just about making meaning, but responding to that meaning. Faith is also about making resolutions. To choose a religion, to choose a religious life, is to make a resolution.

The late theologian Marcus Borg wrote about the Christian tradition as a practice, as in, it requires practice. Those practices include being part of a church, prayer, a daily discipline (prayer, reading, paying intentional attention to God),

engaging in Christian friendship (relationships that include mutual support and dialogue about the faith), "practice in the dailiness of life" (singing, financial responsibility, having a real day of rest and renewal each week), and practicing compassion and justice.

That is a lot. That is a lot more than a mere statement of faith. That is far more than claiming a personal relationship with the divine. Altogether, it is a religion that requires being with other people, a whole lot of thinking about how the teachings inform every day activities, and taking risks for love that go beyond daily activities. Being part of the Christian tradition takes a lot of resolve, as I imagine it does any religious tradition.

My church celebrated the beginning of our new year in November. With the beginning of a season called Advent, we remind ourselves that we are choosing to live in this world as well as for the best version of this world we can imagine. We resolve to listen more closely and respond more faithfully, in our everyday lives, to the emanation of holiness we know in the stories of Jesus and a constant presence we call Christ.

Calendars are ultimately arbitrary tools, but what we do with our few breathing moments is not. ... May you in 2017 find a place of resolve that not only supports your body in its daily work, but brings meaning to your life from relationships that foster trust, moments of calm, and action on behalf of the well-being of others.

Calendars are ultimately arbitrary tools, but what we do with our few breathing moments is not. The consequences of that resolve transcend ripped abs (which I would still like to have). May you in 2017 find a place of resolve that not only supports your body in its daily work, but brings meaning to your life from relationships that foster trust, moments of calm, and action on behalf of the well-being of others.



# 7 STEPS TO RESET IN 2017



BY RONNA  
LAWLESS  
Ames Tribune

Carrie Copley. Photo by  
Ronna Lawless/Ames Tribune



Several years ago, Carrie Copley, of Ames, realized she was in a crazy merry-go-round of a life that wasn't bringing her enough fulfillment and joy.

"Suddenly it seemed that I had everything and nothing," she said.

She was in a rut of working, rushing home to take care of her family, rushing out the door to activities, and then rushing home so she could just rush out the door again.

"I had an 'I can't complain' kind of life, yet still, sometimes in the quiet spaces between working, family activities and all my responsibilities, I felt something was missing," she said.

With a business background as a social worker as well as being a certified coach in the business arena, in 2012 Copley decided to take a big step and become a life coach.

"You can make the decision at any time in your life to upgrade your life from liking your life to loving your life," she said. And that's exactly what she did.

Now Copley owns her own consulting business called Love Your Life. She

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COPLEY Continued from page 7

is a life coach, motivational speaker and also does business training. She helps her clients with personal, business, financial, spiritual and health goals.

At the beginning of the New Year, it's a common time for people to develop goals and resolutions. Copley is sharing 7 Steps to Reset your life and your goals, but she encourages people not to wait until a special date on the calendar to start.

"Don't wait until Monday. Don't wait for a special start date. Get started right now," she said. "Why would you want to put off having a better life?"

Here are Copley's 7 steps to help you push your reset button:

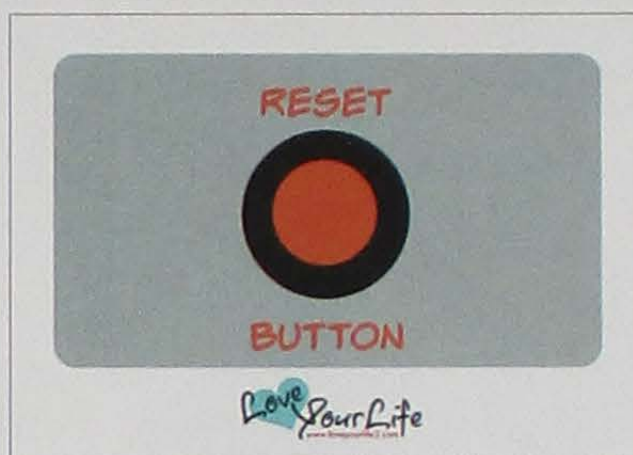
**1. Put your big dream in writing.**

Write what you want your big dream to look like and feel like. Write how your big dream will impact you, your family and society.

"Picture what you want and what it really looks like," she said. "Picture your most amazing future that you could possibly dream for yourself. Even if you fall a little short of your goals, you will still end up with amazing results."

**2. Share your big dream with a couple of people close to you and ask them to help you stay accountable to yourself and your vision.**

This doesn't mean to share it with all of your friends on Facebook. Find one or two people you trust, who will



hold you accountable, Copley said.

"We need people who will celebrate with us and encourage our success, but not listen to our excuses," she said.

Schedule check-in times with your accountability partner to reinforce your commitment to accomplishing your big dream.

**3. Ask yourself why this is important to you.**

It is important to really dig deep into your "why." Keep asking yourself "Why?" over and over until you think you reached the real, deep-seated "why."

"One time I decided to get in shape for a trip my husband and I were taking to Jamaica," Copley said. She worked with a personal trainer and got into great shape.

But on the cruise the all-you-can-eat buffets were enticing, and when she got home, the trip was over and the goal was accomplished.

"Your 'why' has to be bigger than 'Jamaica,'" she said.

**4. Write your "why" and place it around your home and office as a consistent reminder to stay focused.**

"I've had clients place their why

statements on the bathroom mirror, steering wheel, computer and on their nightstand," Copley said. "Be creative on how you display it. It could be a single word or a sentence, but what's important is that it gives you a gentle reminder."

**5. Create a plan and break down the plan into months, weeks and days.**

"What is your ultimate goal?" she asked. "What does that goal look like in five years? Break it down in to yearly goals, then monthly, then weekly goals."

Include celebrations in your plan to reward yourself for small victories along the journey, Copley said.

**6. Be realistic and expect occasional setbacks.**

The best plans have a plan within them to overcome setbacks, Copley said. Don't let your setback be your excuse to stop.

"If you're dieting and fall off your plan, maybe you have a strategy that you will walk more," she said. "Don't just give up and think, 'Well, I failed once so I blew the whole day.'"

At these times, it's important to remember your "why," Copley said.

**7. Review and revise your plan on a regular basis.**

The start of a big dream is often the hardest part, Copley said. Be patient with yourself, start slowly if you must, but just start.

"Your plan should be a workable document, like a business plan adapts as a business grows and changes," she said. "Sometimes you need to realign your goals."





BY JAN  
RIGGENBACH  
Contributing  
Writer

# Go Play in the Dirt!

**R**ecent research found there are a lot of people who never buy a garden plant.

If you're one of those people, consider turning over a new leaf for the new year. Gardening is good for both body and soul. Here's a sampling of what could be in it for you:

- A spirit-brightener when winter feels too long and dreary. Early crocus or winter aconite blossoms pop up through the snow. A pot of forced spring bulbs bursts into flower on the windowsill. And pussy willow and vernal witchhazel shrubs bloom despite a calendar that shows it's still the middle of winter.

- Great activity to share with children or grandchildren. Whether watching a seed you've planted sprout or harvesting vegetables for dinner, gardening is a good bonding experience. It's also a nice break from the hours normally spent staring at a cell phone or playing games on a digital device.

- A sense of awe. Connecting with nature weaves its magic as you watch colorful butterflies flock to sip nectar from your zinnias, goldfinches pluck seeds from the coneflowers, or tiny hummingbirds flit from flower to flower on your honeysuckle vine.

- The most healthy diet imaginable, without spending a lot of money. Feel free to gorge on your own fresh raspberries, blueberries and strawberries. Eat your fill of cherry tomatoes. Make kale chips. Gather fresh salad ingredients from early spring until late fall. Control pests, if necessary, with products listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) for organic produce without paying a premium price.

- Receive many health benefits from the exercise gardening provides. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says people who spend just two and a half hours per week gardening are less likely to be obese or suffer from a long list of ailments including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease and stroke. Gardening also decreases depression. Thanks to adaptive tools, almost anyone of any age or physical ability can garden.

The variety of garden activities not only helps keep exercise interesting but broadens the range of benefits.

- Get fresh air in all kinds of weather. You might be inclined to stay indoors when the weather is too hot or too cold. But if your potted plants are wilting for lack of water on a hot day or your grapevines need winter pruning, you're more likely to venture outdoors and enjoy all four seasons.

- Enjoy the pleasure of sharing. Gardeners often have extra produce, plants, or seeds to share. Sharing garden experiences — whether with friends or neighbors or in a garden club — also increases life's pleasures.



Reap this late winter payoff for a few minutes spent poking bulbs in the ground on a nice autumn day.  
Photo by Jan Riggenschach/  
Contributing writer



BY LISA  
SUGARMAN  
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# It Is What It Is: Trying new things isn't easy, but we've **GOTTA DO IT**

Putting ourselves out there and trying new things can be painful. Like excruciating even. It feels awkward, it's unnerving, and it can be hella intimidating. But it's a huge part of life that, in one way or another, we all have to endure.

Whether it's because of a new job or a new relationship or a new community, the only way any of us can really connect with the people and environment around us is to take a leap of faith sometimes and jump off the cliff.

I mean, as parents, we all teach our kids that branching out and exploring new challenges and meeting new people helps enrich our lives. And God knows I hear myself saying it to my own kids on an endless loop. But how often do any of us do it ourselves, as grownups? How many of us really, truly enjoy exposing ourselves to new, and potentially scary situations? Not many.

We also don't want to be faced with that inevitable awkwardness that can often sour new social situations. That feeling of uneasiness that makes us sick to our stomachs. (Although I believe that's just the taste of vomit welling up in our throats). We want to make connections with people, but we often just don't know how. And believe me, I know, I've been there too.

Look, I know that most of us are just too inherently insecure and don't want to look like an idiot struggling to learn something new in front of other people. Like nobody wants to be that Joey screaming out of control down the ski trail or the awkward friend of a friend at the dinner party or the newbie trying to tee off the back nine with a putter. But sometimes we just are. And we need to get over it. Which is exactly why I try really hard not to let those fears keep me from going for it.

In hindsight, when I look back at a lot of the scarier things I've done — like jumping out of a perfectly good airplane or ziplining over the rainforest or running my first road race or initiating a conversation with a total



stranger — I realize the life changing experiences I would've missed if I had given in to self-doubt.

That's because there's a very definite vulnerability that comes with allowing ourselves to be truly exposed to the people and experiences around us. Most of us don't want to fail or look like idiots or be "The New Guy."

But that's just part of living, though. In fact, it's a key part of the process of growing and adding depth to who we are as people. It's a necessity, even though it's not always easy or comfortable.

Yet, when we do put ourselves out there just for the sake of broadening ourselves and our immediate world — with modest expectations — we're often surprised by how



genuine our experiences are. Because when we're truly open to something new — and I mean truly open — those new things (or people) usually end up blowing our mind.

Like I often think about the friends I probably wouldn't have in my life if one of us hadn't made that first, awkward move. Or the memory of riding that horse at full gallop up the side of that ravine in Costa Rica, that wouldn't exist in that little lockbox inside my head if I hadn't said WTF.

The way I see it, life is meant to be lived. And the way we do that is by connecting with the people and experiences around us. Even when we're petrified or embarrassed or indifferent.

Perfect example is something I finally bit the bullet and did last week. It was something on my bucket list that I just kept making convenient excuses to ignore — too early; too far away; conflicts with work. Because this experience was about more than just meeting someone new or doing something outside my sweet spot; it was about meeting hundreds of new someones and doing painfully hard physical things with a guarantee of a massive ass-kicking on the back end. (I know, it's super enticing the way I frame it.)

But my very tenacious friend Adam never gave up on trying to get me to check out his “fun,” (big air quotes around fun) eccentric group of fitness lunatics who meet three-days-a-week before dawn in Boston (and 32 other cities around the world, by the way) to do insane workouts. And because my subconscious is always elbowing me in the back of the brain to get off my a\*\* and mix it up, I finally said yes. In the spirit of trying something new.

Now this melting pot of workout junkies, ranging from Olympic athletes to couch potatoes, is called November

Project. And they can be as hardcore as it gets. Because even though they're a fitness movement designed to get everyone and anyone at any fitness level moving, they're also notorious for bringing the pain to any bada\*\* who thinks they're up to the challenge.

Honestly, they're intimidating as hell from the outside looking in. But get even a tiny taste of their fitness juju, and you're hooked. Cause these beautiful people do way more than just reach back when anyone reaches out ... they swallow you whole.

I mean, for a lot of people, this kind of thing is waaaaaaaay outside their comfort zone. Like miles. Because everyone hugs it out whether you know each other or not. There's crazy amounts of bouncing up and down super-close together. And there's chanting. Tons of it. And really loud. With a few choice swear words sprinkled in to punctuate the workouts.

Their motto is “Just Show Up,” which immediately diffuses the whole intimidation factor and reassures everyone that it's all just about giving our own best effort.

Needless to say, it was terrifying and inspiring and primal all at the same time. A pretty unique combo.

And that mentality of just showing up hooked me from the first bounce. Because if we just show up, people will almost always be there with open arms to receive us. And not only is that the mantra of November Project, but it's a poignant truth about life in general.

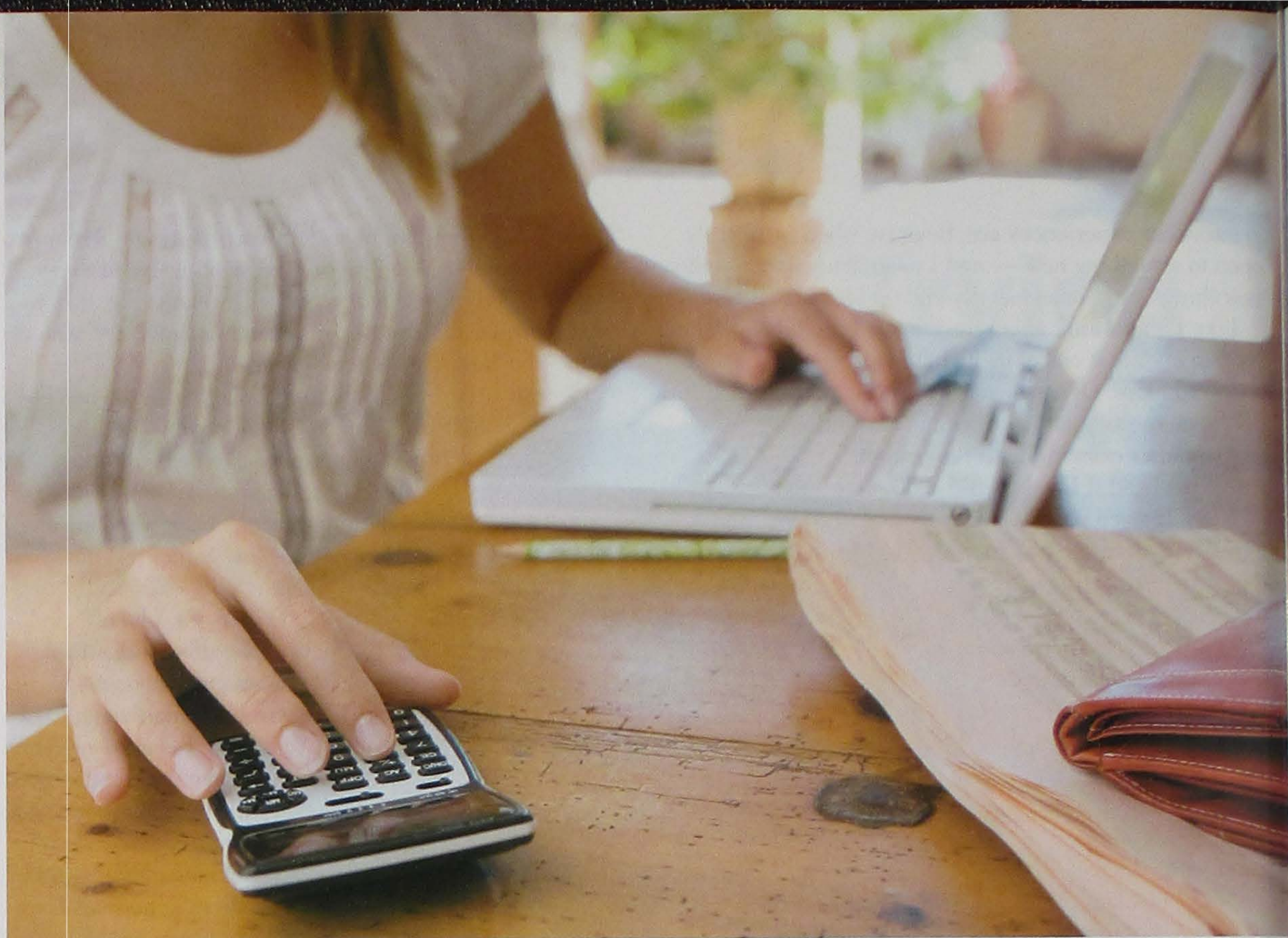
See, most of the time, if we all just bit back our fear of trying something new or reaching out to someone, we'd realize that our greatest friend or our most meaningful experience might be waiting on the other side.

We just have to push ourselves to go for it.

**See, most of the time, if we all just bit back our fear of trying something new or reaching out to someone, we'd realize that our greatest friend or our most meaningful experience might be waiting on the other side.**



BY BARRY  
RITHOLTZ  
Special to the  
Washington  
Post



# No, don't buy those 'best stocks to own in 2017'

**N**EW YORK — Each year around this time, the headlines blare about what you should do with your cash. Click around any of the usual financial media sites, and you will find all manner of experts detailing the "must own" stocks you should be buying right now if you want big returns in the year ahead.

The lists certainly look slick and professional; they seem to be expertly assembled. They also tend to have a similar makeup: Usually a few high-fliers (Apple, Google, Netflix, Tesla); some more modest technology names (Microsoft, Qualcomm); a bank or two (JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs); some conservative dividend plays, a health care or pharma, a mid- or small-cap, as well as a few companies you never heard of.

With the right charts and narratives,

they look impressive. And why not? Many of the companies have had a bang-up year, or were recently in the news. You probably don't realize this, but that's precisely how those companies landed on the lists. That basis of assembly — what pops into the minds of editors, reporters and others — is often why this clickbait tends to bode poorly for future returns.

As an experiment, try a Google search on the phrase "best stocks to own in 2017" — you will find all manner of recommendations. If only you knew how they would perform, you might be able to pull the trigger on one, deploying your hard-earned capital for best effect.

As it turns out, you can find out how they did: Feel free to borrow my time machine.

One hitch, though, it only goes

backward. Thus, I can show you how you would have done had you put money into recommendations made by these same folks a year ago for 2016.

How did they do? For the most part, pretty mediocre.

I grabbed three "top 10 stock lists" — Barron's, Forbes and CNBC — which came up near the top of a Google search. (If we wanted to be statistically pristine, we could assemble hundreds of such lists and track their performance, individually and in total.)

How did these do? Stock markets are up about 8 percent in 2016 (calculated with three weeks left in December.) The stock picker lists saw performances that ranged from 3 percent on the low end to about 7 percent on the high end — and that was before costs. I assumed the impact of dividends was about the same.



If we were to take hundreds of lists, some would outperform, most would not and the average would be below the index. It is not a coincidence that these lists tend to underperform the benchmark. Here are the primary reasons:

■ **Methodology:** There doesn't seem to be much of one; at least not one that is coherent or rigorous. There certainly isn't anything close to academic research supporting the approaches taken. The articles suggested the top 10 lists are assembled by a panel of experts or chosen by the editors and staff. Surveying people who are in your general proximity and may or may not have any stock-picking skill seems to be a pretty random way to make a decision about where to put your money. The results reflect that.

■ **Losers:** One of the keys to stock picking is recognizing that over periods of time, two of three stocks will underperform their benchmark.

That is according to a study by Eric Crittenden and Cole Wilcox, formerly of Blackstar Funds. They reviewed their database, looking at every company in the Russell 3000 from 1983 to 2006. They found that 64 percent of its component stocks underperformed the broad Russell 3000 index over that period. It should come as no surprise that a list that is somewhat random in its assembly will similarly underperform a broad index.

It's not merely underperformance — over those 23 years, 4 in 10 stocks (39 percent) were unprofitable.

■ **Winners:** Conversely, it turns out that index performance is actually driven by a very small number of holdings. The entire performance of the index was driven by just 25 percent of its members.

What are the odds that a very short list — say nine or 10 holdings — will have any of those winners? It's fair to say about 1 in 4. Now what are the odds of the list being over-represented with those outperforming names? Once you understand how a small number of stocks are driving broader indexes, it is easy to see why it is so challenging to pick out those names.

■ **Too concentrated:** Unlike a benchmark of 500 or 3,000 equities, 10 stocks is very concentrated. It's too few to reap the benefits of proper diversification; any one stock can drive down total performance of the group by having a bad year. Some of the performance downside was caused by the disaster stocks, ones that were down 30, 40, even 50 percent. Recovering from that is mathematically

**It's not just the financial media whose stock picking is lackluster. Consider the Ira Sohn conference, one of the biggest finance events held each year, attended by a who's who of hedge-fund managers. ... Just remember that their stock tips are no better than anyone else's.**

daunting, even if your list has some big winners on it.

It's not just the financial media whose stock picking is lackluster. Consider the Ira Sohn conference, one of the biggest finance events held each year, attended by a who's who of hedge-fund managers. People pay \$5,000 to attend (it raises money for a good cause — pediatric cancer research and treatment), and you get to hobnob with rock-star hedge-fund managers. Just remember that their stock tips are no better than anyone else's. A broad index beat the experts in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, too. (2016 is not looking so hot, either.)

And here is the even bigger challenge. Let's say you track hundreds of lists, and one does especially well. Was it the skill of the list-maker, or just dumb luck? How could you tell? That is a question that Michael Mauboussin, chief strategist at Credit Suisse, has spent decades considering. Most investors overestimate their ability to discern between the two.

This time of year is fraught with temptations — overindulging at holiday parties, spending too much shopping for gifts, having a little too much nog. Perhaps the most expensive mistake are these silly exercises in stock picking. Crossing them off your list will save you a bundle.

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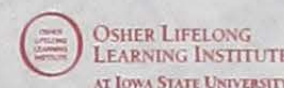
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# How to avoid a holiday finance hangover

**T**he amount of money Americans spend during the holidays is pretty incredible. In 2015, holiday retail sales totaled more than \$630 billion, according to Statista. With so much money being spent, it makes sense that so many people find themselves in post-holiday debt. Indeed, according to the TD Bank Merry Money Survey, 78 percent of Americans have overspent on holiday purchases in the past.

Luckily for you, there are ways to save during the holidays without incurring serious damage. When it comes to recovering from your holiday spending hangover, "The magic is in the budget," said Lauren Greutman, frugal-living expert and author of the book "The Recovering Spender." But a budget is just one piece of a smart holiday spending plan, so here are seven steps to help you fully recover from your year-end shopping spree.

## GET PRE-EMPTIVE WITH YOUR SPENDING PLAN

Not enough Americans make holiday budgets. Only 52 percent of Americans create a holiday budget, according to the TD Bank survey.

Planning is almost always essential to maintaining good financial standing. With holiday shopping and spending, this rule absolutely applies. "Set a budget and stick to it," said Howard Schaffer of Offers.com. "After every shopping trip, log into your accounts to check your balances. Set up account alerts so you're always reminded of your purchases."

Make sure your plan is pre-emptive, so you have a good idea of how your shopping will affect your budget. Schaffer suggested setting a spending limit for each person that you're buying presents for.

## BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF AND KNOW WHERE YOU STAND FINANCIALLY

You can't begin addressing your holiday spending issues without having a realistic picture of your finances. Realism requires honesty and for you to thoroughly evaluate your money.

"Print out the last three months of (your) spending," said Greutman. "Separate everything into categories. Take an average of the past three months spending in each category. This is the number they will start within their budget." In order to set your money on sure footing, you need to take into account financial factors beyond spending during the holiday season.

## MAKE A PLAN TO PAY OFF YOUR DEBT

"The most effective way to mitigate the damage done by holiday overspending is to develop a strict plan for saving, paying off credit card purchases and reducing disposable spending in the post-holiday months," said James Capolongo, head of consumer deposit products for TD Bank. But what are some techniques you can use to address debt





incurred over the holidays?

Make a list of your holiday spending and categorize purchases on a scale from the most important expenses down to the least important expense, said Greutman. "When (people) start to allocate their money, they should start with the most important category and then go down until they run out of money — if they do," she said.

## BEWARE OF AFTER-HOLIDAY SALES

Temptations are difficult to keep at bay, and one of the most enticing is to keep on shopping, even after the holidays have passed. And with so much momentum going, it can be hard to rein in your spending, especially if you're surrounded by after-holiday sales — even after you've already spent so much.

Post-holiday sales prey on Americans' shopping behavior. In fact, according to TD Bank's survey, the biggest reason people spend over their budget is because of impulse purchases.

## TRACK WHERE YOUR MONEY IS SPENT

In order to properly track your spending during the holidays, you need to know where the money is going. "Right after the holidays (people) need to assess the damage done to their pocketbook by going through and figuring out how much they spent versus what they planned on spending," said Greutman. "Then start by decluttering their finances. To do this they need to figure out where they spend money and where they need to cut back."

Another useful strategy to keep a close eye on your money is to create a "countdown fund," said Deacon Hayes, financial coach and founder of WellKeptWallet.com. "This is where you put a specific amount of money aside each month for the holidays."

So, by the time the holidays get here, you have the cash to pay for things instead of relying on credit cards, Hayes added. When the holidays are over, you're good — because everything is already paid for.

## CUT OUT UNNECESSARY EXPENSES

As you track where you spend your money, you can get a better idea which costs are necessary. Start by getting rid of things you don't need to spend money on, said Greutman. "(Then) get back to the basics," she added. "After the holidays, when things start to settle down (it's) the perfect time to get their finances in order and figure out how to start 2017 off with a bang."

Gifts are "necessary" expenses during the holidays, but the extra things you often buy while shopping are not. For instance, 49 percent of respondents in the TD Bank survey said they make unplanned purchases for themselves during holiday shopping; 52 percent said they buy themselves treats such as coffee or food; and 57 percent make impulse buys on stocking stuffers and holiday extras, pushing them over their budget in the process.

"The survey results highlight just how easy it is to overspend on the smaller items that many don't initially factor in to their holiday gift budgets like gift wrap and boxes," said Capolongo.

To eliminate these unnecessary expenses, a key task is for you to create and follow a detailed budget plan, breaking down presents by category.

"Think about giving only four gifts to each child for Christmas and set a budget amount," said Greutman.

## PUT YOUR CREDIT CARD IN TIME-OUT

Credit cards are quick and convenient, but they can easily become a liability. Using credit cards for holiday shopping can become dangerous, said Greutman, because you can lose track of how much money you've already spent.

Even if you are banking on harvesting credit card rewards during holiday spending, using your debit card or having a separate reloadable, prepaid card specifically for holiday shopping is a good plan, she added.



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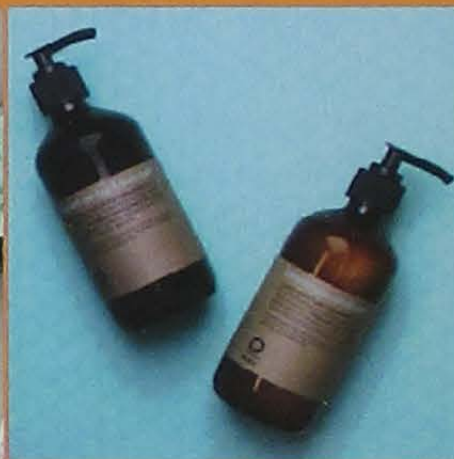
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BY KECIA  
PLACE-FENCL  
Contributing  
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Photo by Kecia Place-Fencl

# What to do when you find your train derailed?

**H**ello 2017! This is the time when many people make New Year's Resolutions. According to Forbes, only about 8 percent of people who make New Year's Resolutions are successful in achieving them. People start off with good intentions and their best foot forward, but often their train gets derailed. The train can even get derailed for people who have had their train on its tracks moving forward for days, months or even years. Sometimes life gets in the way and disrupts good habits, making it easy to fall back into our lazy ways.

Everybody's train gets derailed at some point in life and if they tell you it doesn't, they are lying to you. Your train can get derailed for many reasons: work obligations, illness, kids activities, childbirth, travel, the holiday season, lack of motivation and the list goes on. So how do you get your train back on the tracks?

■ Acknowledge that your train has been derailed. Give your body and/or mind a temporary break before you start your training routine again. Sometimes these temporary breaks can set you up for huge success down the road! The key is to know that this is a temporary break. Set a date that you'd like to get your train back on its tracks and devise a plan to make this happen.

■ Know your why. Why do you want to achieve this goal? Why is this important to you? What motivates you? Being able to answer these questions and referring back to these answers when hiccups in your training occur will help you get your train back on track sooner rather than later.

■ Make it fun. Turn your run training calendar into your favorite board game that you get to move through. Set a theme for this week's training ... who wants to go on a safari?! Maybe a tropical vacation in the middle of winter?! Find a



way to make your training fun. When things are fun, you're likely to stick with it because you want to, not because you feel you have to.

■ Find a buddy to track your goals and hold you accountable. When your buddy cares about you and believes in you and your goals, you are likely to push forward and restore belief in yourself even when you feel like giving up.

■ Celebrate ALL of your achievements no matter how big or how small. I recently read an article that cautioned using the word "just" or "only." For example, a person might say that they "just" ran a 5k race and not a marathon. Or, I can "only" do one pull-up and not 10. Don't belittle your achievements or pass them off as "no big deal." Every achievement is a success and should be celebrated.

■ Don't compare yourself to others or to where you were yesterday or where you want to be tomorrow. Accept where you are today and move forward one step at a time. Focusing on the present will reduce stress and help you get to where you want to be in the future. Life is not a comparison to other people or a contest. Be proud of what you can do, regardless of what is happening around you.

■ Seek inspiration by reading an inspirational book, watching an inspiring movie or volunteering at a local race. Pump yourself up before your workout by listening to music that helps get your mindset in workout mode. When you tap into what inspires you, it can take you a long way in helping you achieve your goals.

■ Feed the athlete, not the monster. When you give the

athlete fuel, it becomes a good habit and much easier to keep your train on its track. Fuel yourself with positive self-talk. Turn those negative thoughts into something positive that fuels the athlete.

■ Focus on the positives. When you complete a work that you didn't want to because of fear, doubt, laziness or tiredness, remember what that adrenaline rush feels like. Remember what it feels like to build confidence by being courageous and facing your fears. Remember the pride you feel when you reach your summit or accomplish new goals.

Set a reward for yourself. If you can do \_\_\_\_\_ for 30 days, you will be rewarded with \_\_\_\_\_. It generally takes 30 days to successfully change a habit, so this is a good time window to consider when challenging yourself to get your train back on track. When you are considering possible rewards, try to make the reward intrinsic. Finding internal rewards for accomplishments will be much more rewarding than external rewards.

Goals and intentions don't have to be only for fitness. They can be used at work, home, volunteering — anything that helps us grow and become stronger as a person. Remember, when you reach a hurdle in life, you don't necessarily have to back up. Acknowledge, pause, put the train back on its tracks and move forward. We all have challenges that can derail us, but when handled with a positive mind it makes us stronger for the future.

**\*\*Before you begin any exercise routine, you should consult your doctor.**

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BY KAREN  
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# Chillin' On Life

Life is mostly what we make it — even if we need to turn it around from time to time and see it in a new perspective.

**W**e learn about life from so many people who come into and out of our lives. Those people can teach us to appreciate so many things — or they can come as lessons for us.

That can be good or bad, depending on how you look at it. Here's a good example: a kid once wrote an answer to the question, "How would you make marriage work?" His answer was, "...tell your wife she looks pretty even if she looks like a dump truck."

I'd like to meet that kid.

Or how about the kid who, on a rainy day, told his mother he wasn't afraid of the lightning because it meant God was taking his picture?

It's all in how you look at it. Perspective. We complicate things so much as adults.

Every new year we resolve to be better, do better, try harder and reach goals that we didn't accomplish in the last year. A friend of mine once excitedly told me about her upcoming trip to California. In the same conversation, I excitedly told her of our new counter-height bathroom sinks and high toilets that were going into our bathrooms in our home.

It was our perspectives on happiness, though I think I should work on getting a life.

From the time our daughter was little, I would sit at the edge of her bed at night and talk to her about all kinds of things. I started out close beside her because she wasn't all that big in those very early years. But over time I noticed that I was sitting back a little further as we talked. She was growing up, and I could either love it or fight it. I knew I would never win that fight, so I chose to love it, albeit, with secret tears in my eyes sometimes as I left her room.

When she was married a year ago, the path to the altar was a rocky one at best because of all the issues that hovered over the process. My father-in-law became ill and was hospitalized six weeks before the wedding. Plans went on, clouded by the fact that he was gravely ill.

Family members took turns sitting by his hospital bed day and night, waiting for what would eventually come. And yet, the wedding plans went on.

One evening as we waited in his hospital room, our daughter was going over her wedding planning notes, when she began to wipe tears away. She said, "It's no fun making wedding plans from Grandpa's hospital room." It was wedding planning from her perspective.

That sweet man went to heaven just one week before her wedding. I felt sorrow for so many people, but especially for my husband and our daughter. For my husband, he would bury his father and give away his daughter all in the same week. For our daughter, the happiest day of her life was clouded by such a rough week, and the memory of another man whom she loved so much. Her wedding day was bittersweet, and it gave us all a new perspective.

It made us all appreciate the fragility of life a lot more, even though for a while we didn't know which end was up, and we had to think about which event we were planning.

Last Mother's Day I was putting together a message to send to a friend who had lost her baby just weeks before she was to be born. I knew it would mean something to her that someone remembered her child, and the emotional pain that she herself has felt every day since then. After all, she is still a mother — even if the mother of an angel.

At the same time I was about to send it, I received a text from one of my sons — from a tractor in the field miles from here, wishing me a happy Mother's Day. I had a new awakening in that moment of the very special way in which I had been blessed. He got to grow up and was able to send me a Mother's Day message. Because of the project at hand, my heart thought about mothers everywhere who have never experienced that. His text message was enough.

Life is mostly what we make it — even if we need to turn it around from time to time and see it in a new perspective.





BY MORGAN FELTNER  
Contributing  
Writer

# Taking care of the environment and the new you

**W**elcome to the New Year! A time when it feels anything is possible, and many of us are inspired to make positive and bold changes in all aspects of our lives. Sometimes that means a new style to represent the new you. That being said, there are some small changes you can make that will have a BIG impact on your life in 2017.

When planning your drastic change or goal for self-improvement, it's important to know exactly what we are using to make these changes. Makeup, filled with toxins (average of 12) we put directly on our skin (the largest organ of our bodies) day in and day out. Skincare products that promise a youthful and radiant glow have hidden chemical costs (average of 23). Lastly, hair products, from hairspray to hair color there are too many ingredients (average of 14 toxins and chemicals) to even begin to determine what good options are out there.

One of my passions is making the world of beauty more clean and healthy. I've been chasing after any "all-natural," "naturally derived," and "organic" products I could find. Unfortunately, in order to have a permanent hair color that covers gray, some synthetic dyes are necessary. Most color lines I've found have an excessive amount of chemicals that enhance performance, permanently damage the hair follicles, and are very harmful to our bodies as well as the environment. Yuck! In my research I found that there is very little available in the U.S. for "organic" or "all-natural" hair products. What I did find are the best options on the market. The brand that stuck out to me in alignment with my desire to open the most eco-friendly, organic, vegan and ethical salon I could create was Oway (Organic Way).

Oway has a product line that is organic, vegan and cruelty-free. Produced in Italy, Oway is held to incredibly high standards for the ingredients use in their beauty products. Although "chemical-free" simply doesn't exist yet, this color line is made with a majority of organic ingredients, and minimal synthetic dyes. As for the Oway Hcolor (permanent color) and Hnector (demi-permanent) I do believe that they are the only company distributed in the U.S. making great progress in cutting back on



harmful chemicals used. They use chemical-free processing when purifying their ingredients as much as possible, in addition to infinitely recyclable packaging.

And in case you need more reasons to be picky about what you use on your 2017 self, these styling products have received numerous awards and acknowledgements in salons world-wide for their amazing results and especially for being chemical-free. Impressively, the Best Hair Color 2016 in the Green Beauty Awards and Best Ammonia Free Hair Color in 2015 and 2016. The results I've seen with Oway hair color and styling products are incomparable to the "all-natural" brands I've used in the past. Not only does every product smell incredible, it's better for you the consumer, and the environment. This year I challenge you to resolve to use the best for your bold beautiful changes, the Organic Way.





Chickpea Gnocchi with tomato sauce. Photo by Goran Kosanovic/Washington Post



# How to make simple Italian gnocchi that just happen to be gluten-free

I've long thought more people needed to know about Roman-style gnocchi. The dish is quite different from the lightly boiled potato dumplings that most of us think of when we consider gnocchi. As much as I love the typical iteration, the Roman version — squares of semolina (or sometimes polenta) layered in a casserole dish, topped with butter and cheese and baked — is much easier to pull together at the end of a busy workday.

You don't eat them the same way, either: You pop the dumplings (heavenly if they're made right) into your mouth whole, or at least I do, and they're usually enrobed in a light sauce and could be combined with any number of other ingredients in a composed dish. The Roman gnocchi, on the other hand, is often shaped into pieces bigger than bite-size, so you use a fork, and it's usually served quite simply, with little more than a tomato sauce on the side, often as a starter.

I was reminded how much I appreciate the dish when I flipped through Antonio Carluccio's charming new book, "Vegetables" (Quadrille, 2016). Carluccio, 79, is an acclaimed Italian cook, writer and TV personality who lives in London, where he ran the Neal Street Restaurant and developed the Carluccio's cafe chain whose branches now number 97. (He also has two restaurants in the United States, both of them in the Washington, D.C., area.)

What I love most about Carluccio's book is the way he pays tribute to Italian traditions (such as the classic summer panzanella salad) while showing flashes of innovation (a lasagna made with thinly sliced beet rather than noodles). The latter is what he applies to Roman-style gnocchi, making it with chickpea flour as a smart nod to the fritters called *panelle* that are a classic Sicilian street food. The dish has just a handful of ingredients — including eggs, nutmeg, butter and Parmigiano-Reggiano — which add up to something wonderfully flexible that also happens to be gluten-free. I enjoyed several squares of it one night fresh from the oven and topped with a little tomato sauce, and the next night I warmed a few more and spooned on saucy black beans and crumbled a little feta over them.

It probably wasn't all that Italian the second time, but who cares?

## CHICKPEA GNOCCHI (PANELLE ALLA ROMANA) 6 to 8 servings (25 large gnocchi)

This twist on Roman-style baked gnocchi, traditionally made with polenta or semolina, uses chickpea flour.

Serve two pieces as an appetizer with tomato sauce, or serve 3 to 4 pieces as a main course, with sauce and a salad, or perhaps as a base for saucy beans, mushrooms or stews.

It helps to have a marble slab or other work surface that's

cool to the touch for spreading the chickpea mixture, but it's not a requirement.

**MAKE AHEAD:** The gnocchi dough can be cooled, cut into squares and refrigerated, covered in plastic, for up to 3 days before baking.

Chickpea flour can be found in the gluten-free or grains section of many supermarkets, and as gram flour in Indian grocers.

Adapted from "Vegetables," by Antonio Carluccio (Quadrille Publishing, 2016).

### Ingredients

5 cups water  
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
1 teaspoon kosher or coarse sea salt, plus more as needed  
Freshly ground black pepper  
2 3/4 cups chickpea flour (see headnote)  
2 large eggs  
Freshly grated nutmeg  
4 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces, plus more for greasing the baking sheet  
2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese  
Warm tomato sauce, for serving

### Steps

Combine the water, oil, salt and pepper in a large saucepan over medium-high heat; bring to a boil.

Gradually add the chickpea flour, whisking constantly, until evenly incorporated. Reduce the heat to medium and cook for 10 minutes; the mixture should be somewhat smooth, but you may still have lumps. Taste, and add salt if needed. Remove from the heat and let cool for a few minutes.

Crack the eggs into a liquid measuring cup and stir with a fork until evenly blended. Stir a spoonful of the chickpea flour mixture into the beaten eggs to temper them, then stir the eggs and a few gratings of fresh nutmeg into the saucepan to form a thick, soft dough. If it is particularly stiff and lumpy, use an immersion (stick) blender to make it smooth and a bit more supple.

Lightly grease a spatula (offset would work nicely) with cooking oil spray. Spoon the dough onto a cool work surface, using the spatula to spread it evenly into a slab that's about 10 inches square and 3/4 inch thick. Let it cool for 10 to 15 minutes, until fairly firm.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Grease a rimmed baking sheet with a little butter.

Use a sharp knife to cut the slab of gnocchi dough into 2-inch squares, arranging them on the baking sheet in rows that slightly overlap. Scatter the butter pieces and cheese evenly over the gnocchi. Bake for 15 to 25 minutes, until a golden crust forms on top.

Serve warm, with the sauce.



BY BONNIE  
BENWICK  
Washington  
Post



Arroz con Chorizo.  
Photo by Goran  
Kosanovic for The  
Washington Post

# Dinner in 35 minutes: A budget-friendly main with color and crunch

## Arroz con Chorizo

4 servings

Corn, bell pepper and cilantro are tossed in for contrasting texture and color. (Here, we used a frozen yellow and purple corn blend from Stahlbush Island Farms.) Topped with an egg or served with scrambled eggs stirred in, this makes a festive yet fairly inexpensive weeknight dish.

Leftovers are great for making fried rice.

Serve with your favorite salsa and/or hot sauce.

Adapted from "My Abuelo's Mexican Feast: A Life and Love of Mexican Food," by Daniella Germain with Elsa Germain (Hardie Grant, 2015).

### Ingredients

- 1 small white onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/2 medium red bell pepper
- 2 1/4 ounces cured chorizo sausage (one 4-inch-length from a 1-inch-wide link)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium jalapeño pepper
- 2 cups long-grain white rice
- 3 cups no-salt-added chicken broth
- 1 small celery rib, preferably with leaves
- 3/4 to 1 cup frozen/defrosted corn kernels (may substitute frozen peas; see headnote)
- 4 to 6 stems cilantro
- 3 or 4 large eggs
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Spanish smoked paprika (pimenton), for serving (optional)

### Steps

Finely chop the onion and mince the garlic. Discard the seeds and ribs from the red bell pepper, then cut the pepper into 1/4-inch-thick strips.

Cut the chorizo into very small dice and place them in a large skillet or nonstick sauté pan over medium heat. Cook for about 3 minutes or just until the meat starts to release some of its oils, then add the oil and whole jalapeño. Cook for a minute or two, then stir in the onion and garlic. Cook for a minute or two, then stir in the rice. Cook for a few minutes, so the rice is well coated and some grains begin to turn opaque, then stir in the broth and celery.

Increase the heat to medium-high; once the mixture comes to a boil, reduce the heat to medium-low, cover and cook for 15 minutes or until the broth has been absorbed and the rice is tender. Uncover and stir in the corn and strips of bell pepper; cover and cook for about 3 minutes, just until they have warmed through.

Meanwhile, coarsely chop the cilantro leaves and some tender stems. Uncover the chorizo rice and toss in the cilantro, then cover and let stand while you cook the eggs.

Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Crack in the eggs (one per serving if they'll be sunny side up, or 3 eggs total if they'll be scrambled) and cook to the doneness you like. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

Uncover the chorizo rice; discard the jalapeño and wilted celery. Taste, and season with salt and/or pepper, as needed.

If you've scrambled the eggs, stir them into the chorizo rice before you divide it among individual plates.

If you've fried the eggs, place one atop each portion. Sprinkle with the smoked paprika, if using. Serve right away.





# A pantry staple brightens this earthy winter soup

I have a dried-fruit problem.

The problem is that I love it so much, I can't have much around or I'll start nibbling, and a snack becomes a mini-meal.

Not the end of the world. But dried fruit is a pretty great ingredient in lots of dishes, from smoothies, salads and rice pilafs to dips, sauces and stews (especially tagines, the Moroccan slow-cooked dish that often includes prunes or dried apricots). And if I've already snacked it to oblivion, I won't have it around when I need it.

I've discovered a coping strategy. Rather than buy the beautiful, vibrantly colored sulfur-treated fruits, I stick with the unsulfured versions, which taste fine but, particularly in the case of apricots, don't look nearly as appealing.

That leaves them free to be used in such recipes as a terrific Armenian soup that caught my eye in the wonderful "Samarkand: Recipes & Stories from Central Asia & the Caucasus" by Caroline Eden and Eleanor Ford. The two tell how apricots feature in so many dishes of the region, including this soup, which uses them to brighten up the earthy flavors of lentils.

## Apricot and Red Lentil Soup

4 to 6 servings (makes 8 cups)

Dried apricots give a wonderfully bright flavor to this simple, surprising soup, which has roots in Armenia.

Adapted from "Samarkand: Recipes & Stories From Central Asia & the Caucasus," by Caroline Eden and Eleanor Ford (Kyle Books, 2016).

### Ingredients

4 medium tomatoes (1 1/4 pounds)

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 large onion, cut into 1/4-inch pieces (2 1/2 cups)

2 medium carrots, scrubbed and cut into 1/4-inch pieces (1 1/2 cups)

3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1/2 cup dried apricots, cut into 1/2-inch pieces

1 teaspoon cumin seed

2/3 cup dried split red lentils

4 cups no-salt-added vegetable broth, warmed

2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or more as needed

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or more as needed

1/4 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, for serving

### Steps

Hull and halve the tomatoes. Use the large-holed side of a box grater to grate the tomato halves, cut sides down, over a bowl until nothing is left but the skins. Discard the skins.

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Once the oil shimmers, add the onion and carrots; cook, stirring occasionally, until they soften and turn sweet, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the garlic, apricots and cumin seed; cook until fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the tomato pulp and cook for a few minutes.

Add the lentils, pour in the broth and increase the heat to medium-high. Once the mixture comes to a boil, reduce the heat to medium-low so the liquid is barely bubbling. Cover and cook until the lentils are tender, 20 minutes.

Stir in the thyme leaves and lemon juice, then remove from the heat.

Use an immersion (stick) blender to blend about half the soup in the pot, leaving the rest to give the soup texture. (Alternatively, you can transfer half the soup to a blender, puree, and return it to the pot.) Add the salt and pepper, taste, and add more as needed.



## savor

BY ELLIE  
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Post

Baba Ghanouj  
is a Middle  
Eastern dip  
whose time  
has come.  
*Photo by  
Deb Lindsey/  
Washington  
Post*



# The Middle Eastern dip whose time has come

Not too long ago, hummus seemed exotic to many Americans. Now, it is practically an everyday food. In light of that, it seems baba ghanouj is ready for its close-up.

This dip/spread offers much the same appeal as hummus: It is rich and creamy, with sumptuously earthy Middle Eastern flavors, and it is made with healthful, plant-based ingredients. But because it is less common (for now!), it brings an element of surprise to the table, whether served as part of a mezze spread, in a pita sandwich or as a dip with vegetables and chips.

I get as much of a kick out of making as I do eating it because it involves cooking whole, uncut eggplant over an open flame, a technique that somehow seems radical but is incredibly easy. You just place the eggplant directly on the grates of a gas stove top, on a grill or under a broiler with either an electric or gas heating element. The idea is to sear the eggplant until its skin is charred and blistered all around, which ultimately imbues the dip with a mouth-watering smokiness.

Once the eggplant is charred, you roast it until it is collapsed and soft inside, then let it cool and scoop out the "meat." Although you discard

the skin, the smoky flavor from the charring permeates throughout, and, as you scoop, some flecks of char make their way into the mix to delicious effect. After a brief whirl in the food processor, the eggplant is mixed with a mash of garlic and salt (turned into a paste, so the garlic flavor is evenly distributed throughout the dip), tahini, lemon juice and parsley. It makes a dip so delicious, I know you will agree it's time hummus shared the spotlight.

## Baba Ghanouj

4 servings (makes about 1 1/3 cups),

**MAKE AHEAD:** The dip can be refrigerated a day in advance.

From nutritionist and cookbook author Ellie Krieger.

### Ingredients

- 1 large or two small eggplants (about 1 1/4 pounds total)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons tahini (sesame seed paste)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

### Steps

- Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.

Place the eggplant(s) directly on the grates of the burner of a gas stove or on a preheated grill or grill pan; cook over high heat, turning several times with tongs, until the skin is charred and blistered all around, about 10 minutes total.

Transfer to a baking sheet. Roast (middle rack) until the eggplant is completely softened and collapsed, about 20 minutes. Let it cool, then cut it in half lengthwise and use a spoon to scoop the eggplant's flesh out of the skin. Discard the skin. (Use a knife to help separate them, as needed. It is okay if some charred bits remain.) Place the scooped eggplant in a food processor and pulse until it is broken down but not completely smooth.

Meanwhile, place the minced garlic in a small mound on a cutting board and sprinkle it with the salt. Use the flat side of a chef's knife to work the garlic and salt together to form a paste.

Transfer the eggplant to a serving bowl. Stir in the garlic-salt paste, tahini, lemon juice and parsley until well incorporated.

**Nutrition:** Per serving: 100 calories, 4 g protein, 12 g carbohydrates, 6 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 150 mg sodium, 5 g dietary fiber, 5 g sugar



# Try fruitcake cookies if you don't like the old-fashioned version

At this time of the year, the hub of activity in most homes is definitely the kitchen. My mother was a great baker, and she spent many hours preparing her Christmas feast of sweets, which always included about eight classics such as Lady Baltimore Cake, Lane Cake, Black Walnut Cake, Chocolate Cake, Japanese Fruitcake (which tastes nothing like real fruitcake) and her special date and pecan cake, just to name a few.

Also on the traditional dessert menu, of course, was her old-fashioned fruitcake, which I must admit I never learned to like. I think perhaps it was the mixed candied fruits she put in her fruitcake that my palate found distasteful. To be more exact, it was the citron found in the commercially-prepared bags of fruits. I would have preferred that she simply made her own mix using candied cherries, candied pineapple, raisins and dates.

Mother always made the fruitcake at least three or four weeks before Christmas. She placed it in an airtight container and put sliced apples over the top to keep it moist. She would replace the apples several times before Christmas. She also soaked cheesecloth with "something" (we didn't ask what it was) and wrapped the cake with this cloth.

Needless to say, her cakes were definitely moist and tasty for those who liked this Christmas dessert.

Even though I don't like old-fashioned fruitcake, I do like fruitcake cookies. When I decided to make them, I opted for a box of pie crust mix as the base for these snacks. I have used this mix for making cookies for more than 40 years — easy-to-make and delicious. What more could we want? I also like the following fruitcake that tastes like candy.

## EASY FRUITCAKE COOKIES

1/2 cup chopped dates (not the sugared kind)  
1/2 cup chopped candied cherries  
1/2 cup chopped candied pineapple  
1/2 cup raisins  
1/2 cup chopped pecans  
1 box (about 11 oz.) pie crust mix  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1 cup sugar  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
2 eggs

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line cookie sheet with aluminum foil or parchment paper. In medium bowl, combine dates, cherries, pineapple, raisins and pecans. Mix well. In

large bowl, combine pie crust mix, baking soda, sugar and spices. Stir to mix. Add eggs and beat well. Stir in fruit mixture. Mix well. Drop from a teaspoon onto lined cookie sheet, spacing cookies about 2 inches apart. Bake for about 10 minutes until light brown. Carefully remove from cookie sheet onto rack to cool.

## CHRISTMAS CANDY CAKE

1 1/3 cups chopped candied cherries  
1 cup chopped candied pineapple  
1 1/2 cups chopped dates (not sugared kind)  
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
4 1/2 cups chopped pecans or walnuts  
1 1/4 cups coconut (canned or in plastic bags)  
1 (14 oz.) sweetened condensed milk (not evaporated milk)

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Grease and flour a 9-inch spring-form pan with tube insert. Combine cherries, pineapple, dates and flour in large bowl. Toss to coat fruit with flour. Add pecans and coconut. Mix well. Add condensed milk and mix well. Press into prepared pan and bake for 1 1/2 hours. Cool completely before removing from pan. Wrap tightly with aluminum foil. It will keep, refrigerated, for several weeks.



BY NICOLE  
ARNOLD  
WRIGHT  
Contributing  
Writer

# 5 secrets to becoming the best version of you in 2017!

**Y**ou may have pictured it in your head numerous times — the best version of you. The best could mean the healthiest version, the happiest version, the smoke-free version or the less-stressed version of you. Whatever your best version means, the following 5 secrets can help you reach your maximum potential in 2017.

■ **Balance your Diet** — Take a good hard look at your daily food intake. Does it include at least a couple of servings of fruits and vegetables per day? Is it made up of sugary processed foods? Are you skipping meals? According to Forbes, only 8 percent of Americans achieve their New Year's resolutions. Take this opportunity to be part of that 8 percent and meet with your Hy-Vee registered dietitian to work on your nutrition goals. He or she can keep you accountable and ensure that your diet is balanced and fulfilling.

■ **Water, Water, Water** — Most of us have heard it before, "You need to drink more water." Take this message to heart and focus on making the majority of your daily beverage intake water. To help increase your intake, take a clear water bottle and draw hash marks evenly spaced along the side of the bottle. Starting at the top, label each hash mark with a time of the day (i.e. 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., etc.) and use that as your hour-by-hour water intake goal.

■ **Relax, Renew and Refocus** — Let's admit we could all use some stress reduction in our hectic lives. Whether you like to listen to music, read,

meditate or exercise, try to take time each day to give yourself a mental break. This mental break can help you refocus your time and perhaps make you more productive because you gave yourself a chance to just breathe.

■ **New Habit: Moving More** — According to The Huffington Post, it takes 21 days to develop a new habit. Start slowly, do something you enjoy, move more throughout your day and after about 3 weeks it will become a new healthy habit for you.

■ **Give Yourself Some Attention** — In 2017, make it a point to write down the things that make you happy. Keep this list handy and add to it throughout the year. Focusing on your happiness may inspire you to have a better outlook on life. After all, we only get one life, so make it your best.

Whether you work on all 5 of these secrets at once or just one at a time, it's a step in the right direction toward being the best version of you. Your Hy-Vee registered dietitian can help you throughout the entire journey. In the words of Zig Ziglar, "You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great."

## Bagel Gone Bananas

Serves 2.

All you need:

2 tablespoons natural nut butter, such as almond, cashew or peanut

1 teaspoon Hy-Vee honey

Pinch of salt

1 whole wheat bagel, split and toasted

1 small banana, sliced

All you do:

In a small bowl, stir together nut butter, honey and salt. Divide the mixture between bagel halves and top with banana slices.

Nutrition Facts per serving: 284 calories, 10g fat, 1g saturated fat, 0mg cholesterol, 368mg sodium, 43g carbohydrates, 7g fiber, 15g sugars, 9g protein.

Daily values: 0% vitamin A, 6% vitamin C, 10% calcium, 11% iron.

Source: [www.eatingwell.com](http://www.eatingwell.com)

*The information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice. Nicole Wright represents Hy-Vee as a nutrition expert working throughout the community to promote healthy eating and nutrition. Nicole is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian Nutritionist, ACE certified personal trainer and member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.*



BY JAE  
BERMAN  
Special the  
Washington  
Post



# Drinking too much sugar

**I**t would be a sad state if the only solution to optimal health were to cut out all sugar. To avoid the birthday cake, milkshake, ice cream and the oh-so-perfect chocolate chip cookie would be a true shame.

Yet we hear so much about the need to decrease added sugars. Research strongly indicates that sugar consumption is associated with excess body weight and Type 2 diabetes.

The 2015 U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee recommended that Americans consume no more than 10 percent of total calories in the form of added sugars. At 2,000 calories a day, that's 200 calories from added sugar. There are 16 calories in one teaspoon of sugar, so that works out to 12 teaspoons a day.

Let's be clear what we're talking about: According to the Food and Drug Administration, "Added sugars are sugars added during the processing of foods, including sugars, syrups, caloric sweeteners and naturally occurring sugars that are isolated from a whole food and concentrated so that sugar is the primary component (e.g., fruit juice concentrates)."

And, according to the advisory committee, nearly 50

percent of our added sugar is from sugar-sweetened beverages: soda, fruit punch, sports and energy drinks, or souped-up coffees and teas.

There's another reason to focus on beverages. You can chug some soda or juice a lot more quickly than you can eat a cookie or candy. Also, when you drink something, it's absorbed very quickly into the bloodstream. If you drink something with a high sugar content, blood sugar will spike quickly. A simple glass of juice can cause the body to go into a quite a metabolic whirl.

I encourage taking ownership of the sugar you consume. You should be aware of what foods have added sugar so you can make informed decisions. If you are mindful of the sugar in beverages and make an effort to decrease intake, you will be able to enjoy sweets and treats when you want them without seriously causing risk to your health.

Let's take a look at some common beverages and their sugar content.

## ■ Soda

One 12-ounce can has nearly 10 teaspoons of sugar. If you crave soda, I suggest pouring a small serving



(two to four ounces) on occasion, and savoring each sip. Really, sip it. Many people have switched to diet soda, but there's a catch: Scientific studies are finding that artificial "sugar-free" sweeteners seem to have damaging effects on the body, such as promoting abdominal fat and obesity. So whether you're drinking regular or diet, watch the portion size and view soda as a dessert to enjoy occasionally.

#### ■ Juice

Just 12 ounces of orange juice, even if it's from 100 percent fruit, has just over eight teaspoons of sugar. That's a lot of sugar in one glass. So try to drink less of it. If you buy smaller containers or simply buy juice less often, you will drink less. Out of sight, out of mind! Start watering it down. Pour three-quarters of the glass and fill the rest with water or bubbly water. Put slices of fruit in the mix to add flavor.

#### ■ Sports drinks

These drinks were created for a specific reason: to support athletes performing sustained aerobic exercise who need to replenish salt, water and sugar for peak performance. But many people drink sports drinks all day long, and it has nothing to do with their athletic performance. For the athletes out there, decide whether the drink meets your needs. Measure sweat rate, notice your urine color, and decide if you need more or less sugar, salt and water. It can take an athlete an entire season to find the right mix, but it's worth it, as proper hydration and electrolytes are essential to performance. Twelve ounces of traditional sports drink contains just over five teaspoons of sugar.

#### ■ Tea

There are countless fantastic teas out there that are full of flavor — some naturally sweet, without any added sugar. There are herbal teas that are berry-, citrus-, mint- or fruit-flavored, and many black teas with a sweet and flavorful twist. If you are a traditional tea-drinker and you put several spoonfuls of sugar in the cup, notice how many teaspoons you use. Then consider adding less. Keep decreasing the content over time (perhaps months). You will notice how your palate shifts and the body adjusts to less sweetness. And if you are drinking tea products in cans and bottles, read the ingredients! Choose tea without any added sugar; then, if you must, add some sugar yourself. Take ownership of how much sugar you drink.

#### ■ Coffee

I love my coffee and happily imbibe it daily. But there's nothing in my cup but coffee. No sugar. Many of us love coffee not for the taste, the ritual or the caffeine kick, but for the sugar rush that comes with it. Either we are adding several spoons of sugar on our own, or we are frequenting coffee shops that add loads of syrups and sweeteners. Many mochas, flavored lattes and other coffee drinks have at least five teaspoons of added sugar. Step one, as always, is to be aware. How much sugar is in those coffee drinks? How much sugar do you add yourself? If you're drinking your coffee only for the sugar, then you might be better off having a dessert instead.

#### ■ Milk

Cow's milk has naturally occurring sugar (lactose). Where things get tricky is when sugar is added to milk, which happens, especially to nondairy milk. If you go to the market and look for the "original" flavor of most nondairy milks, you will find added sugar in their ingredients and added sugars on their labels. Most products offer an "unsweetened" option. Choose that, and then decide if it needs sweetener. Also, watch out for all the flavored milks out there — vanilla, pumpkin spice, chocolate, coffee — as most of those have additional sugar.

#### ■ Alcohol

Again, are you drinking the alcohol for the alcohol, or for the sugar boost? Some cocktails have so much sugar that they are like liquid candy. My suggestion: Enjoy alcohol for the taste, buzz, social experience and not the sugar high. Separate them. Wine and beer have no added sugar; neither does hard alcohol on the rocks or neat. Cocktails can add a fruit squeeze, a twist or some bitters for some healthy flavor. You may be amazed at how much less alcohol you drink when you decrease the sugar content!

Take a moment and start to notice how many teaspoons of sugar you have in a day. Read the ingredients in addition to the label to see whether sugar is added to the drinks and foods you are consuming. Then decide if you want to make a change and decrease your total intake. Take ownership of your decisions and choices rather than mindlessly consuming sugar.





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